



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Livable Places NEWS

Linking land use, transportation, clean air, and community participation to make livable communities

Creating More Livable Communities in the Inland Empire

Government, business and community leaders from across the Inland Empire gathered in March at two Subregional Summits to tackle the challenges and opportunities of one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Inspired by nationally recognized urban designers Michael Freedman and Peter Calthorpe, they set to work on practical next steps toward achieving more livable communities.

The two subregional summits — sponsored by the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) and the San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) — were the first of eleven planned workshops throughout Southern California sponsored by the Southern California Association of Governments in partnership with the Local Government Commission.

The Western Riverside County workshop was held March 19th at the Mission Inn in downtown Riverside. Michael Freedman, Principal of Freedman, Tung and Bottomley, detailed a successful case study of transforming a bland bedroom community into an economic powerhouse with a growing reputation for its vibrant quality of life. In a rapid-fire slide presentation, Freedman outlined how the Bay Area city of Mountain View rallied around the vision of revitalizing their downtown. An investment of \$11 million in public improvements has spurred over \$200 million in private investment in new homes, offices and stores. "You can't legislate investment," he emphasized. "The community has to step forward first. But if you sustain the vision and the political will, the success and investment will spread to surrounding neighborhoods."

Mayor Bob Bartlett of Monrovia reinforced that message with lessons from another success story. When Bartlett was first elected two decades ago, his city's dying downtown was a symbol of a collapsing community. Turning the downtown around was key to restoring hope and pride. "People



The arch of the historic Mission Inn welcomes visitors to a revitalized Riverside downtown (see story on back page).

began to come to meetings and look at each other in a different way," he recalled. "People began to talk to each other. That was what was happening in our town and it continues to happen."

A panel discussion of local leaders, moderated by A.J. Wilson, the Executive Director of the WRCOG, zeroed in on the challenge of overcoming resistance to mixed-use, transit-oriented development among lenders.

On March 21st, Peter Calthorpe, Principal of Calthorpe and Associates, keynoted the San Bernardino County workshop at the San Bernardino Hilton. Calthorpe began with a searing description of our auto-dependent landscape. "We used to build Elm Streets that led to Main Streets that were all walkable," he noted, "but now we have an environment where a kid can't go anywhere unless he is chauffeured to every destination."

Calthorpe then shared examples of plans and projects that restore "a neighborhood feel and human scale." Working at both the regional and neighborhood scale is "an interesting challenge." But, he insists, "it's doable with the public space as the connection between individual pieces."

Calthorpe's challenge was seconded by Mark Pisano, Executive Director of SCAG, who outlined the grim congestion forecasts in the Preliminary Draft Regional Transportation Plan.

The most promising alternative to smog and gridlock, he concluded, lies with cities adopting livable communities approaches, in cooperation with the private sector.

Rick Cole, Southern California Director of the Local Government Commission, spoke passionately about the need to galvanize community participation that is broader-based and more collaborative than the adversarial models of the past. "The form of leadership has changed," he stressed. "But the need for leadership remains."

Rialto's Mayor John Longville, who acted as moderator for the SANBAG workshop, was enthusiastic about the success of the week's two events. "It marks an historic change for the Inland Empire. We're working across city boundaries and political ideologies to improve our quality of life and our standard of living. I'm proud the Inland Empire is setting the pace for the rest of the Southern California region."

How You Can Help Create Livable Communities

We want you to take part in the next phase of the "livable places initiative." Over the next year, this newsletter will bring you timely information about workshops, places, plans and projects that are setting the standard for Southern California.



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Livable Places NEWS

PROJECT. Affordable Homes Bloom on Brownfield Site in Pasadena.



Take a 3.7-acre slice of property next to a noisy freeway offramp. Add toxic soil problems from an old auto wrecking yard, along with a long history of failed redevelopment efforts. Those were the unpromising ingredients offered a developer by the City of Pasadena.

The challenge was accepted by the Olson Company, who specialize in developing affordable housing in urban infill locations. But after negotiating a project of 46 paired homes acceptable to the redevelopment project area committee, the design was criticized for being too internalized and not open enough to the surrounding neighborhood.

The Olson Company persevered. "Everyone had the objective of designing the best project," recalls Olson President Mark Buckland. "Working together we came up with a design that enhances the neighborhood." The project now under construction is surrounded by an attractive brick and ironwork wall because of freeway security concerns, but was redesigned to turn a pedestrian-friendly face to the street. The internal circulation for the project has also been transformed from a driveway dominated by garage doors to a green, walkable lane.

For details: Mark Buckland at the Olson Company (562) 596-4770 x208

PLAN. Dana Point Aims to Recreate a Town Center.



What was once a sleepy Orange County beach town now boasts a thriving marina and resort hotels. But as traffic on Pacific Coast Highway has steadily increased, Dana Point has seen its center decline. Now the city is working on a Town Center Specific Plan to restore a sense of place to a growing community.

"We would like to develop a town center for our residents, one that would be commercially viable and also be attractive to visitors," explains Ed Knight, Director of Community Development. "We'd like to calm the

traffic and create a positive appearance for our gateway."

The plan is being worked on, Knight says, "but that hasn't stopped us from starting to implement the vision." Sidewalks are to be widened and 350 street trees are being planted. Zoning has been changed to promote sidewalk dining and shared parking for businesses. The city is also working to promote pedestrian-oriented development on vacant properties in the area.

"In the town center, we have a one-way couplet," Knight details. "We want to reduce the lanes, put in a buffer of parking, and install chokers at intersections to improve the pedestrian atmosphere."

"We're dedicated to pursuing this vision," Knight concludes. "We look forward to a revitalized town center in the years ahead."

For details: Ed Knight, (714) 248-5560

PLACE. Riverside Makes Downtown Everybody's Neighborhood.



Ten years ago, the beautiful Mission Inn was boarded-up and surrounded by a chain link fence," recalls Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge. "It was a symbol of the decline of our historic downtown."

Numerous efforts to revive the city center had fallen short. But the grand re-opening of the Mission Inn in 1992 marked the beginning of a remarkable renaissance. Downtown Riverside is again becoming the Inland Empire's civic, cultural and legal center.

Colorful banners celebrate the area as "Everybody's Neighborhood," part of a rebirth of neighborhood pride throughout the community. The annual Orange Blossom festival and the weekly Downtown Wednesday Night activities highlight a full calendar of events that draw locals and visitors alike. "It was wonderful to see residents bringing their families downtown at Christmas for the Festival of Lights," muses Mayor Loveridge. "They were rediscovering the excitement of a downtown."

Seventh Street was narrowed, renamed Mission Inn Avenue and remade into a pedestrian-oriented street that connects many of the city's



THE PLACE TO BE

Thursday-Friday, May 15-16

"21st Century California: Anticipating and Planning for Growth and Environmental Quality," organized by the UCLA Extension Public Policy Program. Conference sponsored by a broad range of statewide organizations seeking policy alternatives to avoid the local and state growth wars of the past. At the Miramar Sheraton Hotel in Santa Monica.

For more details: UCLA Extension, (510) 825-7885

"Making Livable Communities: the Next Steps" Workshops

One-day subregional workshops for local government, business and community leaders organized by the Local Government Commission and SCAG.

Thursday, May 29

For the Coachella Valley, at the Double Tree Resort Hotel in Cathedral City.

Saturday, June 21

For the West Side Cities, at the Double Tree Guest Suites in Santa Monica.

Wednesday, June 25

For Orange County, at the Brea Community Center.

For more details: Jean Lamming, LGC, (916) 448-1198

museums and landmarks. When state government offices were consolidated into a modern high rise, a one-story addition created a food court that animates both Mission Inn Avenue and the adjacent Main Street Mall.

Riverside recently won a substantial grant from HUD for the Mission Village Homeownership Zone, which will fund 300 new homes as well as historic and commercial rehabilitation. The popular Orange Blossom Trolley, linking downtown to the university campus, has just been expanded to serve the Magnolia Avenue corridor. "I've never seen a great city that didn't have a great downtown," declares Mayor Loveridge. "I'm proud that Riverside is recapturing its greatness."

For more information: Mayor Ron Loveridge (909) 782-5551



To learn more about the Livable Places Initiative, to get involved in one of the upcoming subregional workshops, or to suggest newsletter items about what you are doing in your community, organization or business to improve the local quality of life, please call Rick Cole of the Local Government Commission at (818) 794-4193 or Joe Carreras of the Southern California Association of Governments at (213) 236-1856. And please pass along the names of other people who would benefit from this newsletter.